

Chairman Jorud and Members of the Committee:

HB 354 is about ensuring d/hh children receive an adequate education and that schools comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It is the result of a grassroots movement of parents, deaf and hard of hearing adults, and interpreters who are working together to make a difference in the lives of these children. We took the Braille Bill that you passed last legislative session, and we used it as template for this bill, following it as closely as we could.

The state of Montana has already recognized the very specific learning needs of these children by building and supporting a state school dedicated to educating them. Last January, in the Special Education Report to the Board of Public Education, the Office Public Instruction identified 199 deaf or hearing impaired children in the 2004-2005 school year. 75% of these children are educated in their home community. The school for Deaf and Blind is provided a budget to provide deaf children and blind children in the state of Montana a quality comprehensive education. Out of the \$5+M budgeted for the School for Deaf and Blind, I estimate that less than \$200,000 is spent on these children. I arrived at this figure by dividing the total dollar figure Mr. Gettle provided by the number of FTE he proposed, and obtained a per teacher amount which I rounded up to \$74,000 each x 2 consultants, for a total of \$148,000. Additionally there is a minimal expense for the contract services provided by the Family Advisors MSDB also employs to provide direct services to a few families with newly identified infants and toddlers. If we add in costs for supervisory staff and incidentals we could raise that figure to \$500,000 and still have precious little invested in 75% of the deaf/hh children.

There are many reasons why all d/hh children are not best served in a residential setting. Among those reasons are issues relating to the loss of family and feelings of abandonment, specialized

health or medical needs of the child, and the families fear of the risk of sexual exploitation or physical intimidation of their very young children with limited or different language skills. In short, parents of today want to raise their own children. . There is a national trend to regionalize services to d/hh children. Schools in Utah, Wyoming, and Nebraska, have closed and Washington, and Idaho are downsizing their residential schools because they recognize the needs of the children are better met in their home communities.

When deaf or hard of hearing children's least restrictive environment is found to be the local school, their teachers need assistance in determining the specific strategies that will work for them. This can only be provided by a trained teacher of the deaf. You will hear in other testimony that Speech/Language Pathologists and Audiologists have demanding caseloads and are not trained to help develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs in the school. Currently there are only 2 outreach teachers who cover all children throughout the state. The extensive travel eats valuable time that could be spent with the children. This bill will correct the problem of inadequate outreach, by providing MSDB the funds to hire 6 additional teachers of the deaf, who will provide input into the Individualized Education Program for every student whose primary disability is listed as deaf or hearing impaired.

My son is 7 years old and profoundly deaf. Hearing aids are of no benefit to him, and he is not a candidate for a cochlear implant at this time. It does not appear that he will be able to hear with any type of technology available today. Starting when he was three, I drove him from Helena to Great Falls, one day a week to attend MSDB. I thought this would be the proper place for him, that the educational options there would be superior to what he would get at home. This experience proved to me that I was wrong. According to Mr. Gettle, the educational outcomes

for children at the school are no different than the outcomes achieved for these children in their home community. According to the Marschark report, there are only three things proven to increase the educational outcome for d/hh children, and they are, "PARENTS", "PARENTS", "PARENTS". If we send our children away to school, we take away the only proven method of increasing their educational outcome.

Tim has no peer group at MSDB, but he is successful in his current placement at Montana City School. Like many deaf students, he accesses education through an interpreter. Unfortunately, since there are no interpreter standards, his teacher and I have no way of knowing what is being signed to Tim, and his knowledge of a subject is based on this interpretation.

School Administrators have no criteria to determine the skill level of applicants. This often results in the hiring of unqualified interpreters who cannot provide the student with the information that is being taught. Without standards, there is no measurement of ability, and therefore, no mechanism to require improvement. It is impossible then to determine the role the interpreter plays in the success or failure of the student. We read very discouraging statistics about the bleak educational outcomes for our children, and I wonder how often it is due to poor or inadequate interpreting.

A few larger school districts in the state employ teachers of the deaf who provide direct instruction to deaf children without the use of an interpreter. There are no standards that require them to have any signing ability. This is the same as hiring a teacher for your children without determining if they can speak English. The instruction may be excellent, but the child does not

understand it. This bill will require standards for anyone who provides direct instruction in sign language without an interpreter.

The legislature did a great thing, last session, in passing the Braille Bill. That bill increased services to visually impaired children and since then the number of VI children identified has risen significantly from the 61 noted in the Special Education Report. We expect that, with the passage of this bill, the number of deaf and hard of hearing children identified will explode.

This bill is about appropriate education for deaf and hard of hearing children. It has been almost 20 years in the making. We have been too patient, and our children can wait no longer. I was instrumental in initiating this bill, with the support of Betty VanTiegam and the Montana Association of the Deaf, input from Mr. Bob Runkle, Office of Public Instruction and Mr. Steve Gettle, Superintendent of MSDB, many interpreters, and parents. We are here together to ask you to invest now in our children to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Thank you.

Cleo Klepzig

PO Box 1215

East Helena, MT 59635

406-459-6196

Subj: **House Bill 354**  
Date: 1/25/2007 10:38:07 PM US Mountain Standard Time  
From: [missy@missinterpret.com](mailto:missy@missinterpret.com)  
To: [cleokc77@aol.com](mailto:cleokc77@aol.com)  
*Sent from the Internet (Details)*

TO: Education Committee of the Montana Legislature  
Re: House Bill No. 354

My name is Missy Grinnell, a Sign Language Interpreter in Montana for 12 years. I am writing to urge you to pass House Bill No. 354. This is a critical piece of legislature for our state and needs to be considered by all our representatives.

I have worked as an interpreter in the Bozeman School District, at Montana State University, and in the communities of Bozeman, Gallatin Gateway, Billings, and Helena.

I entered the sign language interpreting field shortly after graduating from Montana State University in Bozeman with a Communications degree in 1994. I had an interest in sign language and had spent three months working with Deaf children in the Philippines during my senior year. My first interpreting position was in the Bozeman School District, replacing an "interpreter" who worked with a sign language book on her lap so she could look up signs with which to communicate to the Deaf girl. It was a wonder any communication was achieved at all, let alone equitable access. However, I, fresh out of college with no formal training as an interpreter, was not an adequate replacement. However, I understood the serious responsibility that I had in providing this student with access to her education, and so I embarked on gaining the skills and knowledge necessary.

In 1999 I received an Educational Interpreter Certificate through Front Range Community College. It was largely through this in-depth, three-year training that I began to understand where the state of interpreting in Montana was lacking. And it was here I developed my skills and knowledge in order to help rectify the problem.

Sign language interpreters in Montana currently have no incentive to gain professional development in the field of interpreting. There are no minimum standards set by Montana law to require that they have a working knowledge of the process of interpreting, have had training in moral and ethical judgment and that they are fluent enough in sign language to convey a teacher's words accurately. This is not the "least restrictive environment". Individuals who lack the knowledge of interpreting and the skills to be an interpreter are providing an inequitable education to their students.

By moving House Bill No. 354 to the next level, we take a step toward addressing this injustice in order to adequately educate the Deaf children in Montana. With the passing of this bill, interpreters around the state will have an incentive to develop in the discipline of interpreting and will be held accountable to provide the best interpretation possible in order that our Deaf students may have a more equitable education. There are educational opportunities available by which interpreters can develop knowledge and

skills, such as the Educational Interpreter Certificate Program. Additionally, the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment is a valuable tool by which the state or individual school districts can assess the proficiency of their sign language interpreters.

Let us do our part to ensure that our Montana Deaf students receive an adequate education. Please pass House Bill no. 354.

Thank you,

Missy Grinnell, M.Ed  
Sign Language Interpreter  
P.O. Box 6072  
Bozeman, MT 59771  
(406) 580-9630  
[missy@missinterpret.com](mailto:missy@missinterpret.com)  
[www.missinterpret.com](http://www.missinterpret.com)

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Representative Roger Koopman  
Montana House of Representatives  
PO Box 200400  
Helena, MT 59620-0400

Dear Mr. Koopman,

I am writing you in **support of bill HB0354**, "Expanded services for deaf children in schools". This bill will come before the Education Committee. A key aspect of this bill is an appropriation to hire six outreach specialists that will provide services to deaf children throughout the state.

I have firsthand knowledge regarding the raising of a deaf child because my 12 year old daughter, Cille, is deaf. Currently Cille is "mainstreamed" in Sacagawea Middle School in Bozeman. We have gone to great lengths to assure success for our daughter in society. This has been a very difficult struggle for me, my wife and my seven children. We have been helped tremendously by an outreach specialist from the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind.

Deafness is truly a unique disability. Early childhood development is dominated by auditory learning. Deaf children are behind in their learning almost from birth. This learning deficiency tends to compound over time. However, with the right kind of energy, services, technology and education these children grow to be exceptional members of society and provide unique gifts to everyone around them.

Unfortunately, most deaf children in Montana are not as lucky as Cille. With only two outreach specialists in the state and over 200 deaf children spread across this geography it impossible to provide the needed services to all these children.

I have always supported your fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer. And this is truly an example of pay now or pay later. This bill is a great opportunity to express fiscal forethought. The earlier and better the educational intervention for deaf children the less likely they will be to need institutional and long term services from the government. With education, these children will grow to be excellent contributors to society and not drain services. If only one or two more children a year are given the opportunity to stay off welfare in their lifetime, this program will be a huge fiscal success.

It is important to know that the services provided by these outreach specialists will be available to all deaf children in the state. Not just the ones in the public school system. Children in Christian schools and home schooled children will be provided these services. This bill is truly a family values bill. Providing these services to the families will allow them to stay together and choose the educational setting that is best for their family.

There may indeed be some institutional aversion to this bill, because this bill provides the service directly to the families and children and not to government entities. Not only is this bill fiscally sound, it is the right thing to do for the children and families of Montana.

Mr. Koopman, I respectfully urge you to support this bill. It is often difficult for people to understand the difficulties in educating deaf children. If you or another member of the Education

Committee would like first hand experience or more information, I would be happy to assist your decision making process. Thank you very much for your time.

Respectfully,

Sean Patten  
3767 Blackwood Road  
Bozeman, MT  
587-1119



Subj: **HOUSE BILL NO. 354**  
Date: 1/25/2007 9:38:27 AM US Mountain Standard Time  
From: charles@montana.edu  
To: RICKJORE@HOTMAIL.COM, MCAFERRO@ONEWEST.NET  
*Sent from the Internet (Details)*

As a proud associate of the deaf community here in Montana, I very sincerely ask for **HOUSE BILL NO. 354** to be approved and receive wide endorsement from all members of our legislature concerned with the education of ALL Montana residents. Members of the deaf community face enough challenges in schools currently to necessitate any help the state of Montana can ever offer them in any way.

**Please PASS THIS BILL.** So many families across the state of Montana will be very positively affected by the passing of this bill that it is imperative to **PASS HOUSE BILL NO. 354 PLEASE.**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 354** would establish standards for educational sign language interpreters, and appropriate accreditation for personnel who provide direct instruction ("teachers of the deaf"). Lord knows there is always a desperate need for quality instruction at all levels of Montana's education system, and this bill offers hope and confidence to those in need. Sign Language Interpreters do not just interpret for a student in school, but conversely they interpret the students entire surrounding environment in the effort of offering as equal of an experience to the deaf or hard of hearing student as the hearing/speaking students experience. Be that a conversation in a hallway with an instructor, or more often fellow students in the classroom, and *everything* an instructor says in a class. A deaf student would miss out on so much information if they are having to deal with an incompetent interpreter. To be a professional interpreter one must adhere to a strict code of ethics and a very high level of service and ability to translate sign into voice and vice versa. **HOUSE BILL NO. 354, once passed** will begin the process of getting those very much needed high standards adhered to. **Please PASS THIS BILL.**

Thank you and please seriously consider passing this bill for the betterment of the health of the state of Montana, as there really is nothing more important than education in a person's life. God Bless you and guide you,  
Charles Elchlepp

**Subj:** My deaf son  
**Date:** 1/24/2007 10:35:56 PM US Mountain Standard Time  
**From:** wmd@mtintouch.net  
**To:** rickjore@hotmail.com, koopman@int.net, repraser98@bresnan.net, mblasdel@bresnan.net, bcdc@digisys.net, ixoye777@centurytel.net, wsgrinde@aol.com, robinhamilton@bresnan.net, lakemill@montana.net, mlange6@hotmail.com, hd84ward@wmconnect.com, franke.wilmer@gmail.com, cleokc77@aol.com

*Sent from the Internet (Details)*

My name is Bridget Roe and I am writing to you in reference to House Bill No. 354. When I reviewed the bill, I got lost in all the legal language. Therefore, I decided to write you to let you know what it means to me on a personal level.

My 6 year old son, Maverick, is profoundly deaf. He was diagnosed when he was 2 years old. We have spent the last four years trying to do everything we can to give him a decent chance at a normal life. He has bilateral cochlear implants. That is a surgical procedure that enables sound to bypass his ears and send the information directly to the nerves. This is phenomenal technology, but there is no cure for deafness. He needs extensive speech therapy, medical attention from specialist not available in our area, and very expensive equipment. After all this work, he still relies on an interpreter to help him understand what he is hearing.

We live in a very rural area in central Montana with very little access to services. For my son's first year of preschool, we had two different "signers."

Neither person had ever signed before, but were chosen from the community to learn to sign for my son. The student knew more than the "teacher." Hearing children are surrounded by language, and pick it up naturally. Deaf children need to be surrounded by sign language to learn to communicate. Without that, they cannot progress. My son's education was essentially put on hold while his "signers" learned the language. However, most experts agree it takes at least 4 years to become fluent in sign language. Both of these people quit in less than 6 months, and he started with someone at the beginning again. When tested, neither could sign more than 10% of what was said. I can't imagine any child being able to succeed with only 10% of the instruction.

Interpreters are not merely someone who can sign. It is a profession that requires training and education. They attend professional schools, and receive certification in their field. Most states have mandated minimal requirements. Montana is one of the last states to propose these minimal standards. It is time we show our children how much they mean to us.

My family has tried several different solutions to this education dilemma. We have even driven 110 miles one way to take my son to a school with an adequate interpreter. The traveling caused great strain on our family.

Deaf children hold immense possibility. With proper instruction, they will not be doomed to rely on assistance their entire lives. I have met many successful deaf adults. This bill could help my son become one of them. This bill could mean a different life for so many children. We need minimal standards for interpreters to insure our children are getting a proper education.

Montana is a large state with at least one deaf child in every community. It is not possible for the School for the Deaf and Blind to reach all of these students with only two outreach personnel. If they had the additional 6 workers, they could visit schools to oversee the education of these students in their own hometown. I know many people are asking why these students don't just attend MSDB? I would like for you to put yourselves in our shoes. We are business owners, and cannot relocate. In order for my son to attend MSDB, he would have to live in a dorm. He would only be able to come home once every month. He is only 6 years old. Can you imagine sending your 6 year old away? Sending my son away is simply not an option.

My school district has tried to help us in any way they can. Deaf education is a specialty that is simply unavailable in our area. We have great educators that want to help, they just need someone with the know how to get it done. MSDB outreach could provide that with montly visits to our school. A Deaf Educator could show us how to modify his current curriculum to be more visual, and therefore, inclusive for him.

I know it must seem as if every group or organization wants something from you. We are not asking for a government handout. We are asking that you help these children now, so they can become prosperous adults. Certified interpreters and visiting deaf educators are essential to providing my son with an adequate education. All he needs is the means to receive the same information everyone else is getting.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I appreciate your consideration in this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,  
 Bridget Roe  
 PO Box 722

Thursday, January 25, 2007 America Online: Cleokc77

Subj: **House Bill 354**  
Date: 1/25/2007 10:38:07 PM US Mountain Standard Time  
From: [missy@missinterpret.com](mailto:missy@missinterpret.com)  
To: [cleokc77@aol.com](mailto:cleokc77@aol.com)  
*Sent from the Internet (Details)*

FOR EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE MONTANA LEGISLATURE  
Re: House Bill No. 354

My name is Missy Grinnell, a Sign Language Interpreter in Montana for 12 years. I am writing to urge you to pass House Bill No. 354. This is a critical piece of legislature for our state and needs to be considered by all our representatives.

I have worked as an interpreter in the Bozeman School District, at Montana State University, and in the communities of Bozeman, Gallatin Gateway, Billings, and Helena.

I entered the sign language interpreting field shortly after graduating from Montana State University in Bozeman with a Communications degree in 1994. I had an interest in sign language and had spent three months working with Deaf children in the Philippines during my senior year. My first interpreting position was in the Bozeman School District, replacing an "interpreter" who worked with a sign language book on her lap so she could look up signs with which to communicate to the Deaf girl. It was a wonder any communication was achieved at all, let alone equitable access. However, I, fresh out of college with no formal training as an interpreter, was not an adequate replacement. However, I understood the serious responsibility that I had in providing this student with access to her education, and so I embarked on gaining the skills and knowledge necessary.

In 1999 I received an Educational Interpreter Certificate through Front Range Community College. It was largely through this in-depth, three-year training that I began to understand where the state of interpreting in Montana was lacking. And it was here I developed my skills and knowledge in order to help rectify the problem.

Sign language interpreters in Montana currently have no incentive to gain professional development in the field of interpreting. There are no minimum standards set by Montana law to require that they have a working knowledge of the process of interpreting, have had training in moral and ethical judgment and that they are fluent enough in sign language to convey a teacher's words accurately. This is not the "least restrictive environment". Individuals who lack the knowledge of interpreting and the skills to be an interpreter are providing an inequitable education to their students.

By moving House Bill No. 354 to the next level, we take a step toward addressing this injustice in order to adequately educate the Deaf children in Montana. With the passing of this bill, interpreters around the state will have an incentive to develop in the discipline of interpreting and will be held accountable to provide the best interpretation possible in order that our Deaf students may have a more equitable education. There are educational opportunities available by which interpreters can develop knowledge and

skills, such as the Educational Interpreter Certificate Program. Additionally, the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment is a valuable tool by which the state or individual school districts can assess the proficiency of their sign language interpreters.

Let us do our part to ensure that our Montana Deaf students receive an adequate education. Please pass House Bill no. 354.

Thank you,

Missy Grinnell, M.Ed  
Sign Language Interpreter  
P.O. Box 6072  
Bozeman, MT 59771  
(406) 580-9630  
[missy@missinterpret.com](mailto:missy@missinterpret.com)  
[www.missinterpret.com](http://www.missinterpret.com)

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thank you for emailing me on this. i found out with my son that he was hearing impaired when he was first born when he didn't pass any of his first born hearing tests. it was hereditary in his fathers side so i was told when i was pregnant with him. i was lost because i did not know how i was going to communicate with my own son. so i went to work and searched for help. i finally got some help through the state with some sign language. and that was the only way to communicate to my son. he did not know how to talk. so to this email i think that the deal on interpreters is very very important especially in my situation. my son is now 4 and he is learning to talk but he relies on sign language as much as talking. sign language is number one to him and the english is second. so i think that it is very important as he grows to keep the interpreters available in all schools in all parts of the state for them who need them. if it wasnt for the sign language i don't think that my son would be where he is today.

thank you,  
melissa oakes and my son johnny justesen

# Montana City Elementary School

Tony Kloker, Superintendent  
Kathy Kidder, Principal  
11 McClellan Creek Road  
Clancy, Montana 59634  
Telephone: (406) 442-6779  
FAX: (406) 443-8875

January 26, 2007

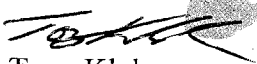
To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing as a proponent to House Bill 0354. We have a deaf student in our school. In spite of the fact he cannot hear, and hearing is one of the main modalities used to learn, this student has made incredible academic and social gains this year. This amazing team of professionals goes far beyond his interpreter and teacher and includes a paraprofessional, speech pathologist, special education teacher, a team of professionals from the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind and his mother. The team has devoted numerous hours beyond the professional work day to learning sign language, teaching other students to sign, reading professional articles and going the extra mile to maximize this student's educational experience and individual success.

Success, however, has not come without a price. This young man is currently enrolled in first grade but has been in our district for four years. We have spent countless hours in meetings trying to develop an appropriate plan to enable him to best access his education. Three years in a "guess and check" mentality has been exhausting for the adults involved and a haphazard way to meet this child's educational needs. The district has struggled over the last four years to develop an IEP that would allow this deaf student to access his education in the least restrictive environment.

HB354 covers three areas that would have benefited our district and, more importantly, the IEP team as we struggled to develop a plan with minimal direction, guidance or resources.

1. Having the Board of Education develop standards for interpreters to follow would have allowed the district to be better prepared in hiring a qualified interpreter as well as provided for the student to properly access and be a part of the learning environment.
2. Having an individual that has successfully completed a course of study as a teacher of the deaf from an accredited college or university would be an invaluable part of the IEP process to help plan an appropriate course of action for a deaf student being educated in a public school. The complexity of educating a deaf child goes beyond the expertise of most public school personnel. The ability to "hit the ground running" and address the deaf student's educational needs at an early age would be extremely beneficial. Having an expert to turn to in guiding the educational direction would be a benefit to the deaf student and his peers.
3. The funds requested in this bill would assist in acquiring competent professionals to deliver specific services necessary for deaf students to be successful in public schools throughout our state.

  
Tony Kloker  
Superintendent

## Interpreters: the Conduit to Education

My name is Elizabeth Hanlon. I am currently employed as the staff interpreter at Montana State University in Bozeman. I have been an educational sign language interpreter for 12 years working in K12 as well as post-secondary settings. I hold dual certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, the only organization that currently provides certification testing for interpreters at the national level. I would like to address House Bill 354, particularly as it relates to establishing standards for educational sign language interpreters.

I need not quote the statistics that prompted this bill. Cause and effect is clear: mainstreamed education is the status quo for our deaf and hard of hearing students; these students continue to fail academically. Interpreted education is ineffective because the quality of the interpreted product is substandard.

The mechanisms are already in place to institute what HB 354 requires. An assessment tool is readily available: the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) developed by Dr. Brenda Schick at the Boystown National Research Hospital. "The EIPA is a tool that evaluates the voice-to-sign and sign-to voice skills of interpreters who work in the elementary through secondary classroom using videotape stimulus materials and a procedure that includes a comprehensive rating system." It is used by states across the U.S. as a qualifier of minimum skills for educational interpreters.

Education and training for educational interpreters is readily available through institutions such as the Distance Opportunities for Interpreter Training Center (DO IT Center). The Montana Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf has nationally certified members who are able to mentor K12 interpreters. The Montana Association of the Deaf hosts events that are ideal for linguistic exposure. Interpreters in mainstream schools also function in the role of tutor: the Montana School for Deaf and Blind Children sponsors programs that would benefit interpreters in learning how to instruct deaf and hard of hearing students. Videoconferencing technology can bring workshops to even the most remote interpreter.

With all of these opportunities available, why are interpreters performing so poorly? Because very few participate in activities that would improve their skills. In Montana an educational interpreter need not even hold a high school diploma. Perhaps this sounds extreme, but I take it from a real life example. Teachers are required to hold educator licensure. Should not the employee who is transmitting information directly from the teacher to the student, hopefully in a comprehensive and comprehensible manner, also be obligated to standards? It is time to end the complacency and hold educational interpreters accountable for the quality of service that they provide. **Please support House Bill 354.**

Testimony Respectfully Submitted by Cathy Jury:

I am currently a Teacher for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Missoula, Montana. Prior to this, I was an interpreter in the education setting for 10 years. In preparation for that, I did attend an Interpreter's Training Program. During my years of interpreting, I went back to school to complete my Elementary Education degree and my Master's in Deaf Education.

I truly believe in people being educated in the area of deafness and sign language in order to be in a place of teaching and interpreting. This is a requirement for other areas of education so I'm not sure why this same standard wouldn't be held for Interpreters and Teachers for the Deaf. Educating deaf and hard of hearing children is very challenging and rewarding. Those who are involved in the process need to have the proper tools to be able to meet the needs of each of their students. We wouldn't allow an English teacher to teach a Spanish class without the proper education. But yet, we are allowing teachers and interpreters to teach and communicate in a language that they may not be qualified.

As a teacher, I know I will need to be assessing interpreters who I work with. We are fortunate here to have interpreters who all have been through an Interpreter's Training Program or the Educational Interpreter's Training Program through Colorado. Our school district does have each interpreter go through an initial screening and evaluation. However, periodic evaluations and assessments are also necessary and it would be great to have consistency through the state with standards set for both teachers for the deaf and interpreters for the deaf. Typically (speaking from an interpreter's perspective), we are evaluated by those who don't know sign (which typically happens when a principal or other staff member evaluates us) by no fault of their own, they just base their evaluations and observations on the reaction of the student, how we interact in the classroom, and sometimes how our signs look! It isn't my goal to sound negative, it is just true. Schools want staff members to be evaluated so this is what typically happens. This kind-of assessment is hardly accurate, and it would be more useful to have standards to live up to. This would also bring more professionalism to the roles of interpreters.

As far as outreach is concerned, I feel that this is a necessity. Personally, I don't have a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. However, I was in a rural school setting for 3 years, and I saw what a family had to go through to get what their deaf child needed. In that 3 years, I was visited once by a person from the outreach program in Great Falls. I understand the outreach people there are completely overloaded so I am not saying anything negative. I'm just trying to point out that there is a huge need for more outreach positions. At that time, even though I was a new interpreter, I was often looked at as expert and was often asked to make decisions regarding the student's IEP. I feel that I did the best I could at the time, but it would have been a great benefit to be able to have other support available. Our state is so spread out that we need to create networking. I believe that having more people involved in the outreach program will provide the networking that the families of our deaf and hard of hearing students need to be successful and to be able to have all the opportunities that they deserve. When a family finds out that their child is deaf or hard of hearing, there are typically many feelings and questions they must sort through. Having someone who has the training and knowledge of options should be readily available.

Thank you for your time and attention to the future of the services provided to our deaf and hard of hearing children around the state.

Cathy Jury  
Teacher for the Deaf  
Missoula County Public Schools  
728-2400 ext. 4656



From: "Margaret Tryon" <MTryon@milescity.k12.mt.us>

To: "Lori Ruffier" <lruffier@hotmail.com>

Subject: Re: Lori

Date: Tue, 23 Jan 2007 10:42:07 -0700

You certainly can add my two cents worth. We have a difficult time getting help in rural eastern montana. If we have a blind student they have to go to MSDB at the schools expense. If we have a hearing impaired student our audiologist helps but she covers all of eastern montana. It would be excellent to have more outreach for the small schools especially. You go girl. margaret

Margaret Tryon, Special Education Director

Miles City Schools

1604 Main Street

Miles City, Montana 59301

406-234-3812

[mtryon@milescity.k12.mt.us](mailto:mtryon@milescity.k12.mt.us)

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